

# PUMPKIN BUTTER

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## PLANT PARTS:

The pumpkin that we eat is the fruit of the species *Cucurbita mixta* or *Cucurbita pepo*, members of the gourd family. Some people also roast the seeds in the oven and enjoy them as a tasty snack. Pumpkins are generally planted in the beginning of July and harvested in the fall. Each plant is monoecious, meaning that it contains both male and female flowers. Historically, pollination occurred with the aid of the squash bee, but as this species has declined over the years from pesticide use, the honey bee has taken its place as the pumpkin's main pollinator. When the fruit develops, the carpels form a hard outside rind and a soft inner flesh. The latter is often used in delicious baked goods, such as pumpkin pies and pumpkin muffins.

## ORIGINS AND HISTORY:

Most sources claim that pumpkins originated in North America, although no studies have been definitive. Native American peoples cut them into strips and used them for a variety of purposes, including roasting them as food and weaving them into mats. After colonization of the New World by Europeans, the plant was sent back to Europe, where it received the name, "pepon," meaning, "large melon," in Greek. The tradition of the jack-o-lantern originated in Ireland and Scotland from a story about a man named "Stingy Jack," who, in tricking the devil into preventing him from entering hell, was forced to wander the earth for eternity with only a hollowed-out turnip and a burning coal to light his way. In order to protect their homes from Jack's spirit, people began to carve hideous faces on turnips and hang them in their windows. The pumpkin replaced the turnip as the plant of choice for jack-o-lanterns after the advent of its importation from North America. Now, families across America carve pumpkins into Halloween jack-o-lanterns every October.



## NUTRITION INFORMATION:

You may guess by the orange appearance of a pumpkin that it contains a large amount of the antioxidant beta-carotene. Once ingested, beta-carotene is converted to vitamin A and used for many important bodily functions. For example, vitamin A is essential for the production of rhodopsin within the eye. With a deficiency of vitamin A, one may develop night blindness. Beta-carotene may also reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease. A single cup of cooked, boiled, and drained pumpkin without added salt contains only 49 calories! In addition, this same serving provides 245% of your daily value of vitamin A, 19% vitamin C, 11% dietary fiber, 8% iron, and 4% calcium.

### **FUN FACTS:**

- The heaviest recorded pumpkin weighed 1,140 pounds.
- In early colonial times, the crust of pie was made from pumpkins and not the filling.
- Pumpkins are 90% water.
- Around 90-95% of processed pumpkins in the U.S. are produced in Illinois.
- Pumpkins are a member of the vine crop family called cucurbits.

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/pumpkins/facts.cfm>

### **RECIPE:**

#### Ingredients:

1 (29oz) can solid pack pumpkin puree  
1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice  
1 (2oz) package dry pectin  
4½ cups white sugar

#### Directions

1. Mix solid pack pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice, and dry pectin in a medium saucepan over high heat
2. Bring to a boil
3. Mix in 4½ cups of sugar all at once
4. Stir constantly
5. Return to full boil and let it boil for 1 minute
6. Remove from heat
7. Transfer to container
8. Seal and let chill in refrigerator